



Working with the Military to Build Safe Communities

It is vital to include the military in a Safe Communities coalition. Military installations (all property the military has responsibility for) are integral community members. In many communities across the United States, the military is a large local employer. The uniformed and civilian employees of the military and their dependents make up a key part of the local population.

This folio describes how Safe Communities coalitions can attract their local military installations to join their injury prevention efforts.

Definitions

When we refer to “the military” in this folio, we mean persons on active duty, reservists, and civilian employees of the Department of Defense (DOD). This includes those in the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard.

Seeking Out the Military

As large employers, military bases need to keep their uniformed and civilian personnel safe and injury-free to be ready to defend the nation’s interests. Military base employees use local roads, so they encounter the same traffic hazards as everyone else in the community. Safe Communities coalitions need the participation of local installations to affect overall community safety. From the coalition’s point of view, recruiting military participation yields access to a possible missing community segment. The military offers clearly defined channels through which to communicate with these community members. Cooperation between civilian and military authorities creates the perception that the community presents a united front on safety issues.

The military also offers coalitions expertise in communicating effectively with highrisk drivers: young adults. Few other organizations are as adept at motivating young people.

Military Preparedness and Traffic Safety

The safety of military personnel, both on duty and off duty, is a key part of

mission readiness: people and equipment ready to serve locally or overseas. Motor vehicle crashes affect the preparedness of America's troops. In fact:

- ▶ The leading cause of death and serious injury for all military personnel is motor vehicle crashes, not training accidents or combat.
- ▶ Military personnel have just experienced the highest motor vehicle fatality rate in the last four years.

Because of the impact of traffic injury on mission readiness, in 1999 the Department of Defense launched a servicewide effort to improve highway safety. The DOD issued Instruction 6055.4 setting guidelines for a comprehensive safety policy and programs. The Instruction governs personnel in all military branches of the service, civilian personnel in a duty status, and anyone else while on a military installation. The DOD charges each military installation with responsibility for all traffic safety issues any other community faces, including:

- ▶ Licensing of its military drivers.
- ▶ Setting and enforcing on-base traffic codes.
- ▶ Education and re-education of drivers.
- ▶ Pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- ▶ Vehicle occupant protection.
- ▶ Crash investigation and reporting.
- ▶ Roadway construction and modernization.

The DOD Instruction also charges military bases with traffic safety responsibilities beyond those often found in the civilian environment:

- ▶ More stringent regulation of motorcycle operators.
- ▶ Requirements for at least four hours of traffic safety instruction for all licensed drivers under 26 years of age.
- ▶ Training for those assigned to operate specialized vehicles.
- ▶ Supplying on-base elementary and secondary schools with curriculum on effects of alcohol and drugs on driving skills.

Although not specifically mentioned in the Instruction, military hospitals, like their civilian counterparts, also play a role in traffic injury prevention because they treat crash victims.

The DOD Instruction directs military installations to work with community leaders and grassroots organizations to plan and implement local education efforts. It opens the door for Safe Communities coalitions.

Military and Civilian Traffic Safety Similarities

Military installations face the same highway safety tasks as civilian communities, including:

- ▶ Difficulty keeping keep traffic injury prevention on the community's agenda without a recent tragedy.
- ▶ Not enough time, money, or human resources available.
- ▶ Lack of interest to make things happen.

Military safety professionals also use many of the same tools as their civilian counterparts:

- ▶ Safety belt and sobriety checkpoints.
- ▶ Child safety seat checkups.
- ▶ Safety or health fairs.
- ▶ Mock crashes.
- ▶ "Fatal Vision" goggles, which simulate the visual sensations of Driving While Intoxicated (DWI).
- ▶ Articles in local publications.
- ▶ Posters, flyers.
- ▶ Materials from government agencies, such as Buckle Up America Week, Safe & Sober Planner, 3D Week, etc.
- ▶ Bicycle rodeos.

Special Challenges

Military personnel frequently pose special traffic safety challenges:

- ▶ Large population in a high-risk driver category (males ages 18 to 34).
- ▶ Variation in driving-skill levels among troops (many new Army recruits may lack a driver's license).
- ▶ Many installations are in rural areas with lots of two-lane roads.
- ▶ Most personnel are new to an area, so they are unfamiliar with local roads and laws.
- ▶ Sizable personnel turnover, so large numbers of drivers always need training.

- ▶ Driving skills can get “rusty” when personnel have been at sea or deployed for long periods.
- ▶ Personnel often travel long distances when on leave or during holidays, and as a result, can be fatigued while long distances driving on unfamiliar roads.

Reserve military units face added challenges:

- ▶ Reservists usually travel some distance to their weekend duty, often after a full week at their regular jobs. Later they drive home after a busy weekend fulfilling their duty requirement. Thus, often they are drowsy drivers.
- ▶ Reservists often don't get enough practice operating specialized vehicles to become proficient.

Special Advantages

Military safety professionals have advantages:

- ▶ Uniform directions from the central authority, the Department of Defense.
- ▶ Additional safety training required for drivers under the age of 26, motorcyclists, and operators of specialized vehicles.
- ▶ Ability to order uniformed and civilian employees and dependents to adopt certain behaviors.
- ▶ Personnel who are used to taking orders.
- ▶ Well-organized channels for frequent communication.

The military also has a risk management system as part of its culture. All uniformed personnel are trained in a five-step process to judge the safety of every situation:

- ▶ Identify hazards.
- ▶ Assess the hazards.
- ▶ Develop controls and make the risk decisions.
- ▶ Implement controls.
- ▶ Supervise and evaluate the results.

Because the thought process becomes second nature to military personnel, they are primed to accept the behavioral changes urged by traffic safety specialists.

Organization for Traffic Safety

The military has structures to deal with traffic injury prevention at the Federal level, at the service level, and the local installation level.

The Safety Office for the Department of Defense sets broad policy for all service branches. Visit the following web site:

► www.defenselink.mil

Each branch has its central safety offices, which typically have limited staffing, often just one to two people. Traffic safety is just one of many responsibilities. The offices act as consultants/facilitators for their installations and offer some tools and training. Each branch has a Service Impaired Driving Prevention Task Force.

Each local installation typically has a Safety Office or Safety Officer. Traffic safety is usually only one job performed by the base Safety Office. Many Safety Office personnel come from an occupational health and safety background rather than traffic safety. Responsibility for traffic injury prevention may be under the authority of base police, medical staff, schools, fire departments, facilities, maintenance, etc. This shared responsibility can sometimes hamper coordination.

Here is a brief overview of the central safety offices for each military branch.

Navy/Marines

The Naval Safety Center, Motor Vehicle Safety Division, located in Norfolk, VA, supports both the Navy and Marines and has shown a keen interest in Safe Communities. For more information, visit:

► www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/motorvehicle/default.htm

► www.safetycenter.navymil/ashore/articles/motorvehicle/safecommunity.htm

► www.hqmc.usmc.mil/safety.nsf

The Marine Corps has been focusing on nonuse of seatbelts. The Marine Corps Traffic Safety Order was revised to make nonuse of seatbelts punishable, which means that nonusers are subject to Uniform Code of Military Justice action. Installations have stepped up enforcement: On-base usage exceeds 90 percent and equals 100 percent at a few installations. At Camp Pendleton, those caught unbelted are sent to a Saturday seatbelt class.

The Marine Corps Safety Division produced a safe driving video concerning belt usage and purchased copies of the National Safety Council seatbelt video "Diana's Last Message" for all Combat Visual Service Centers. The Marine Corps theme for the first quarter of fiscal year 2003 is seatbelt use: All bases, stations, and units have been instructed to address it aggressively. Focus groups are being held to get Marine input on ways to get everyone buckled. Because most unbelted fatalities occur off the installations, the Marine Corps partnered with

surrounding communities of all base/stations' during the November-December 2002 Click It or Ticket Seatbelt Mobilization.

Air Force

The Headquarters Air Force Safety Center, Ground Safety Operations, is located at Kirkland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, NM. One person works part-time on traffic safety. The Air Force's chief traffic safety effort is an annual campaign called "101 Critical Days of Summer." Before the event, the Center distributes lists of suggested activities to its 87 installations, which pay for developing materials to implement activities. For more information, see:

► <http://safety.kirtland.af.mil/AFSC/RDBMS/Ground/ground.html>

Army

The Army Safety Center is headquartered at Fort Rucker, IL, where one person works full-time on traffic safety. The Director of Army Safety created a six-point safety model for privately owned vehicles used as the minimum standard in every unit. To support it, the Safety Center created an Internet toolbox for use by commanders and leaders.

For more information see:

► <http://safety.army.mil/home.html>

The Army's Forces Command has contracted with the American Institute for Public Safety (AIPS) to deliver its "Combat Aggressive Driving" program at 13 major military bases across the Nation. AIPS coordinates instructor training, public awareness campaigns, and outreach to communities and to State and local governments, ensuring that non-harmful driving principles are communicated to soldiers, families, and civilians at key Army posts. AIPS invites local law enforcement to attend courses they teach at the Army bases and assists local communities in identifying safety problems to eliminating traffic hazards. AIPS helps localities apply for grants to pay overtime to local and State law enforcement to increase enforcement of area laws.

For more information see:

► www.aipsarmy.com

Approach Strategy

Identify local coalition members who already have contacts on the base. Ask them to query their contacts to learn:

- Commanding Officer's attitude toward traffic safety.
- What is being done now?

- ▶ Special problems.
- ▶ Needs coalition might be able to fulfill.
- ▶ Who would be the appropriate first contact?
- ▶ When is the best time to approach.
- ▶ Events on the base in which the coalition might be able to assist or participate.
- ▶ Organizational minefields to avoid.

Who?

If your local research does not locate whom the first point of contact should be, try:

- ▶ Safety officer.
- ▶ Police department.
- ▶ Hospital or health clinic.
- ▶ Public affairs office.
- ▶ Base Commanding Officer (CO).

The CO may be the best option because his or her sign-off will make the lower-echelon personnel feel comfortable about participating.

Here is more specific guidance related to each service branch:

Navy and Marines

Every base has both a Safety Manager and a Security Officer (called Provost Marshal in the Marines). The Safety manager, often a civilian, is involved with education and mitigating hazards. The Security Officer enforces laws and investigates incidents. A base also may have a separate Chief of Police. Some larger facilities may have a Traffic Safety Officer who reports either to the Safety Office or the Security Office. Each base has a Traffic Safety Committee, which meets quarterly, and a Drug and Alcohol Counselor.

There is no sole answer on whom to contact. In Cherry Point, NC, and Kaneohe, HI, the base Safety Officers initiated Safe Communities efforts for their installations. In Kitsap County, WA, the chief of police on base and the Navy's Regional Security Council Officer were the contacts for the community DWI programs. In San Diego, the local Safe Communities coalition invited the commanders of the area's major shore and ship-based commands to participate.

Air Force

Safety is a “commander’s program,” which means each commander has responsibility to implementing it for those under his/her authority. All 87 Air Force installations worldwide have a Safety Office. The Safety Office works as consultant to commanders and coordinates the entire base’s activities. (Hospitals have their own Safety Offices.) Each base also has a Provost Marshal in charge of law enforcement. Two recommended points of contact are the Safety Office or the Public Affairs Office.

Army

Every base has a Safety Officer, who may work for the Commanding Officer of the entire base, the Provost Marshal (police), or the Personnel Office. Each base company has someone responsible for safety. Send a letter to the Commanding Officer of the base with a copy to the Safety Officer. The traffic Safety Manager at the U.S. Army Safety Center will help Safe Communities coalitions identify the right person at their local installation. Support or auxiliary groups of spouses of uniformed personnel are also possible allies.

Coast Guard

Each base is supposed to have an area-specific safety policy; but only the larger bases have an assigned Safety Officer. Otherwise, safety is “collateral duty” for an officer with other responsibilities. Few bases have a security force. So, the Commanding Officer is probably the place to start. Many communities may already have contacts with the local Coast Guard installation because police and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) often work with the Guard on water-safety issues. Boating and motor vehicle safety are strongly linked, especially on impaired operators. The Coast Guard has 30,000 to 40,000 auxilliarists (community volunteers) who own boats and work with it on water safety. Some volunteers may already be Safe Communities coalition members.

What? – The Message

Although off-base crashes actually kill and injure more military men and women than on-base ones, it may be difficult for military authorities to see their role or jurisdiction over off-base driving. Local statistics on crashes, traffic citations, etc., that involve military personnel will be persuasive.

Show your contacts how the coalition can help them do their job better or more easily. Let them know you are concerned about the welfare of the troops, their dependents, and the civilian employees.

Even if the base is not willing to get involved with the greater community, you should understand that bases are also self-contained communities that may prefer to start their own Safe Communities coalition. In the long run, it will positively affect community safety, so offer to assist. Urge the base to coordinate its coalition efforts with those of the greater community.

When?

Throughout the military, traffic safety typically receives more emphasis in the summer and during holidays (as in the civilian world) because more people are on the roads during those periods. Likely times for a successful approach:

- ▶ After a major traffic incident occurs involving military personnel because you'll have the Commanding Officer's attention.
- ▶ In advance of the summer or major holidays when the base is likely to be doing a traffic safety push and could use some help.
- ▶ Prior to your next coalition meeting, invite a representative to attend.
- ▶ Anytime.

More specifically, here is when the military branches communicate with their personnel on traffic safety. Approaching them prior to such times may make them more receptive to the Safe Communities message:

Navy and Marines

Navy and Marine installations discuss traffic safety during:

- ▶ Welcome aboard briefings for new personnel and their families.
- ▶ General military trainings.
- ▶ Safety standdowns.
- ▶ Prior to holidays.

Air Force

Air Force traffic safety activities are sporadic, but all base personnel receive some communication annually during:

- ▶ Orientation for new arrivals.
- ▶ "101 Critical Days of Summer" annual campaign.
- ▶ Commander's Down Days.
- ▶ Commander's Calls.
- ▶ Town hall meetings held quarterly for entire base, including dependents.
- ▶ Commander's Meetings (when all commanders on base get together).

Army

The Army communicates with personnel on traffic safety on an on-going basis, but especially prior to holidays and leave.

How?

A personal appeal from a coalition member who has an appropriate contact on base is the best way to approach the local military installation. Whether you use the phone, mail, or a personal meeting, it is your choice based on your knowledge of the local situation. Be:

- ▶ Succinct.
- ▶ Inviting.
- ▶ Clear about benefits of participating.
- ▶ Direct about the action you want them to take.
- ▶ Persistent in your follow-up.

Act Now!

Building safe communities and maintaining a battle-ready fighting force are national goals in which all Americans have a stake. Achieving the objectives is done locally, one community and one base at a time. The two critical civil goals become linked on traffic safety and injury prevention. Help your nation and your community: Invite your local military installation to join your Safe Communities Coalition. It's a win-win for everyone.

Innovative Safety Activities Used by the Military

Navy/Marines

In 1990, Kitsap County, WA, home to Naval Submarine Base Bangor, had the seventh highest county alcohol fatality rate in the State, but by 1999 it had the lowest. The decision of the county and the naval base to work together to fight DWI produced the turnaround. Some tactics:

- ▶ The base hosts a monthly law enforcement luncheon for all area police chiefs so officials can share information.
- ▶ Mock DWI scenes were held with the local coroner, fire crews, emergency airlift, etc.
- ▶ The County obtained a grant to produce awareness materials distributed on base.
- ▶ The Community sent military personnel for training in crash investigation and DWI.
- ▶ The Navy flew community personnel out to ships heading for the base to

brief incoming sailors about Washington traffic laws.

- ▶ Navy police volunteered at a local Law Enforcement Day for children.
- ▶ The base did a red ribbon campaign when new .08 BAC level law went into effect and posted zero tolerance signs.
- ▶ The base coordinated sobriety check points with the County after new .08 law went into effect to send message that the entire county had zero tolerance for driving under the influence (DWI).
- ▶ The County DWI specialist appears at orientation sessions for new personnel.

Army

The Director of Army Safety created a six-point model safety program for privately owned vehicles. It is used as the minimum standard in every unit. To support it, the Army Safety Center created an Internet toolbox to help commanders and leaders identify causes of crashes. It offers controls or alternative behaviors, which they can teach their soldiers.

The tools include:

- ▶ Sample free ride taxi card.
- ▶ Tally form for monitoring and rewarding company performance.
- ▶ Pre-leave vehicle safety checklist.
- ▶ Talking points for pre-trip briefing.
- ▶ Safety quiz.
- ▶ Public service announcements.
- ▶ Standardized driver training program on CD-ROM.

At any Army base in Louisiana, if a driver is caught failing to wear a safety belt on Saturday or Sunday, the individual must stand beside the road holding a sign urging others to buckle up. If caught a second time, the offender's commanding officer must also stand by the road holding a sign.

Air Force

Bolling Air Force base is located near Washington, D.C. Within minutes of the base's front gate, traffic laws are alternately under the jurisdiction of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Many area highways and bridges carry a traffic volume beyond capacity and the District's streets are often confusing. To prevent problems for new personnel and dependents arriving at the base each year, Bolling created a video to explain the local road system and common hazards. It is shown in orientation sessions at town hall meetings and on base TV. There are also plans to post it on the Internet.

